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Employment Protection in the Context of Collective Displacement – A European view

The history of social policies and social movements clearly verify that in the coattails of industrialization there was interest to protect labour for economic and work related risks. The labour, and, in some degree, their families have been protected against too long working days, low pay, unfair contracts and unhealthy working conditions. The early interventions are seen as expression of the interest to develop minimum rules and negative control against dismissals. Later on the idea of social protection took more positive and proactive forms within the areas of employment protection, career development, training and re-training and workers' codetermination rights at the work place. At both levels, negative and positive regulations, we find the variety of national as well as international regulations and variety of legal and contractual traditions.

Since the recession of the 1990 in Finland and elsewhere in Europe, we find new policy lines and measures of social risks management, especially in the context of plant closings and relocation of the whole establishment. These modes of social protection have been tested in the context of the recent recession. In the paper, we have a closer look on the national and European Union wide pro-active methods of employment protection and their efficiency by using the case study examples of plant closings. When pursuing the benefits of the economic growth and allowing for the globalization of markets, governments pursued different strategies to cope with the risks of attached to globalisation. At least four different strategies ranging from protections to pro-active methods are identified. We find justified variations in the methods, coverage and outcomes of labour protection and societal interventions which supports the idea of societal choice. More widely we suppose that the new risks of globalized economy gives reason to compare the societal methods and practices of employment protection and bring developed and emerging economies closer to each other and there is a need for deeper social dialogue on social responses on economic risks.